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ABSTRACT

This report assesses the quality and effectiveness of the educational services (partnership schools) provided to at-risk students in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), Wisconsin. It discusses the major themes emerging from the review of the school-by-school study and the issues that should be considered in the planning and implementation of future alternative education programming and the enactment of related policy. Additional topics examine the quality and extent of monitoring, supervision, support services to, and successful practices of MPS partnership schools. Major themes and problem areas discussed include: (1) the absence of multicultural curricula, (2) perceptions held of community-based partnership schools, (3) partnership autonomy and statutory compliance, (4) authentic assessment and credit granting, (5) individualized educational training plans, (6) staff development, (7) parental involvement, and (8) behavioral reassignment programs. Each section of the report contains recommendations for appropriate action by MPS officials. An appendix provides the study conclusions. Contains a 20-item bibliography. (GLR)

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MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS' QUALITATIVE EVALUATION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

July 1992

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INTRODUCTION

In February of 1992, the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development (DAPMD) of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) began planning a qualitative study of alternative programs in community-based partnership schools. In late March, a contract was awarded to La Causa, Inc., to coordinate the implementation of the research design, the collection and analysis of the data, and the writing of the final report and recommendations. [1]

Implementation of the study began in March of 1992. Eleven (11) of the community-based partnership schools associated with MPS were selected for the study.[2] Visits to these schools were conducted during March and early April. Collection of school-by-school baseline data, and transcribing of student, staff, and parent interviews were completed in early June 1992.

This evaluation was primarily concerned with assessing the quality and effectiveness of the educational services provided to at-risk students in MPS community-based partnership schools. To achieve this goal, evaluators sought to

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[1]. Tony Báez, Coordinator of Educational Support for La Causa, Inc., a community-based agency with broad experience working with at-risk populations and educational issues, was the principal researcher and author of this report. La Causa, Inc. is located at 809 W. Greenfield Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53204, telephone 414-647-5960.

[2]. There are 18 MPS community-based partnership schools. However, the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring decided to evaluate only the 11 partnership schools with more than two years in the system. A second phase to this study should include the rest of the partnership schools in the network, as well as MPS-based alternative schools.

* *identify the practices of partnership schools which appear to help make effective their delivery of educational and support services to at-risk students;*

* *identify fiscal, management, reporting, curriculum and program design issues which affect how MPS partnership schools comply with DPI and MPS regulations;*

* *review procedures used by partnership schools to assess students' academic progress and to grant academic credits;*

* *assess the adequacy of the facilities of each partnership school participating in the evaluation;*

* *identify ambience/climate issues affecting the effective delivery of educational services in MPS partnership schools;*

* *identify issues related to: the adequacy of program articulation between MPS and its partnership schools, MPS student assessment and assignment procedures, the adequacy of supervision of MPS teachers, the adequacy of overall MPS program monitoring, and of MPS student and staff support;*

* *identify programmatic, curriculum, student assessment and development, parent development, staff development, program evaluation, and other technical assistance needs of partnership schools; and,*

* *develop recommendations which can help guide the funding, monitoring, student and staff support, evaluation, and technical assistance to MPS partnership schools.*

This final report is submitted by La Causa, Inc., in compliance with our contractual obligations, to the

Director of the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development. The report provides a synthesis of the data collected as per the objectives above. It also discusses the major themes emerging from the review of the school-by-school findings of the researchers, and of the issues which should be considered in the planning and implementation of future alternative education programming and the enactment of related policy. Each section of the report contains recommendations for appropriate action by MPS officials.

* * *

COMMUNITY-BASED ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Community-based Alternatives and Wisconsin's Children At-Risk Legislation

An evaluation of community-based alternative schools associated with MPS needs to be placed in its proper historical and educational policy context. It also must be informed by an understanding of Wisconsin's Children At-Risk Legislation, and by recent changes in the discipline policies and procedures of the Milwaukee Public Schools.

Community-based alternative schools are not new to Milwaukee. As in other parts of the country, they grew out of the ***Freedom School*** movement in the early 1970's. They began as small programs located in storefront-type operations. Most sought to provide another choice for students who didn't "fit" in the public school system. Milwaukee's alternative schools catered mostly to poor White, Hispanic, Native American, and Black youth.

In the early 1980's individuals historically associated with alternative schools in the city successfully lobbied state government and received a $200,000 grant for the creation of ***Milwaukee's Youth Initiative (MYI)***. This set the tone for a new awareness of the needs of at-risk youth and called particular attention to the condition of minority youth in the central city.

A few years later, the sustained activism of this coalition of youth advocates and community-based organizations led to the enactment of ***Wisconsin's 1985 Children At-Risk Legislation***. At the heart of this legislative Act is the notion that the education of at-risk children must be a shared responsibility of the public schools and the community; if the educational interest of at-risk youth cannot be sustained within traditional school settings, then it is the responsibility of the state and school districts to provide them with options so that they can complete their high school education.

MPS and its Partnership Schools

Under the ***Children At-Risk Legislation***, MPS can subcontract for educational services with community-based alternative schools for as much as 30% of the total number of at-risk students in the school district. MPS can reimburse community-based alternative schools up to 80% of its annual per pupil expenditures per child served. During 1991-92, this percent translated to several payment schedules averaging approximately $4,780 per student, and nearly some 4 million dollars in payments to community-based alternatives.

The resources made available since the passage of this legislation have been a blessing to Milwaukee community-based schools. Now they can draw public school funds to support the educational services which they had been providing with limited resources to at-risk students for more than a decade. Over the last seven years, the more established alternative schools have become, contractually and programmatically, ***MPS Partnership Schools***. Recently, a new group of alternative programs has been added to the network. Most of the new programs are in community-based, multi-service agencies.

Under the specifications of the ***Wisconsin Children At-Risk Legislation***, MPS must take annual count of all children who are "at-risk" of not graduating from high school because they are one or more years behind their age group in academic performance or credits attained, and are also dropouts, truants, teen parents, or have been adjudicated in the correctional system. In 1990-91, MPS estimated that there were 12,974 at-risk students attending its schools, and that approximately one third of its 9th graders would probably not graduate from high school.

The majority of MPS at-risk students attend classes in MPS schools and MPS-based alternatives. Officially, it is the district's policy to assign a student to an MPS partnership school only after all other remedies have been exhausted. During 1991-92, the number of contracted seats intended for at-risk students in these schools was 1,417, but only 1,295 students were actually enrolled. Of these, approximately 950 were served by community-based alternatives and 345 were enrolled in high school and vocational programs at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC).

If the trend continues, the number of students assigned to community-based alternatives may double by the fall of

1992. According to the MPS Comprehensive Support Center,[3] the number of students in need of alternative placement for 1992-93 may be as high as 3,500 students. Some observers suspect that this trend will be furthered by the recently MPS Board approved "Discipline Plan" --which promises to remove "chronic disrupters" and other "problem" students from traditional MPS schools. They also have suggested that if MPS officials are not watchful, school district staff will probably displace or "dump" more at-risk students in community-based partnership schools.[4] This may force many of these schools to shift from being "choice" alternatives to schools which operate as MPS centers of "last chance intervention."[5]

Demographic data for 1990-91 suggests the following profile of students assigned to community-based alternatives: 60% are males and 40% females, with a mean age of 17.0; about 52% are African American, 38% White, 6% Hispanic, and 4% other; over 81% had fewer than 8 credits, while almost 65% had fewer than 4 credits; over 90% qualify for free lunch programs; and, between 10-15% of them have multiple social and family problems which interfere with

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[3]. During the past year, the Comprehensive Support Center (CSC) operated as a central assessment, referral, and placement agent for MPS at-risk students.

[4]. Critics who speak of MPS "dumping" youth, refer to the belief that certain at-risk students may be "pushed out" of the public schools system by teachers and administrators who think of alternative schools as dumping grounds for youth they no longer want in their schools.

[5]. It is important to note that Milwaukee's network of alternative schools offers a great variety of programs and services. Not all of these schools are designed for at-risk students only. Some of these schools existed long before the enactment of ***Wisconsin's At-Risk Children's Legislation***.

their successful school completion.[6] Some critical observers warn that MPS should recognize that not all community-based alternatives may be equipped to adequately meet the needs of these students, and that what may evolve from the growth of this *partnership relationship* is another form of dual school system: in one system, the "good kids" will be served; the other *unstable* system, will serve the "problem kids," most of whom will be predominantly poor and of ethnic/minority background. As in the tradition of racially segregated schools --unless something is done now to prevent it--, the latter system may turn out to be one generally characterized by fewer resources, less access to quality facilities and instructional technology, a second rate curriculum, and inadequate staffing.[7]

Programmatic Design of MPS Partnership Schools

To comply with performance provisions included in the At-Risk legislation, MPS put forth administrative and curriculum standards to govern the contractual relationship between MPS and its partnership schools (see Appendix B). These standards require, among other things, that

* MPS partnership schools be private, non-profit, non-sectarian *agencies* located in the school district;

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[6]. Data above was collected by the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development.

[7]. Dr. Henry Levin, professor of Education and Economics at Stanford University, has warned that school districts across the country are keeping more students from dropping out by placing them in alternative schools, but that taking "watered-down" courses in many of these schools may hurt them in the long run. Levin says that "The kids don't learn more, but we are able to hold on to them longer... for many it is a holding operation...It's not the answer." (See Milwaukee Journal, July 26, 1992, p. A11). Other prominent educators across the country have echoed his concerns.

* the agency provides a facility adequate to accommodate a minimum of 25 students and appropriate in structure to meet building code requirements;

* the agency ensures that all instruction and pupil support services provided to at-risk students be staffed by at least one DPI licensed teacher or "other licensed staff personnel who will supervise the instructional program and pupil support services;"

* the agency seeking MPS funds describe the alternative program to be offered to at-risk students "which will allow them to meet the high school graduation requirements;"

* the agency has adequate administrative, fiscal, and personnel procedures necessary to ensure effective program delivery and use of MPS funds;

* the agency has an advisory board/committee which represents the interests of participants;

* the agency complies with all relevant non-discrimination laws;

* the agency provides a "full day curriculum" and "a description of the curriculum modifications and alternative programs to be offered to at-risk students...;"

* the agency provides instruction in career exploration or job shadowing and preparation, supervised work experience, and occupational training;

* the agency's pupil evaluation standards (grading criteria, procedures for granting credit, and testing for progress in reading and math) are consistent with the school district's standards; and that,

* the agency develops and implements a clearly stated project participant application procedure and an Individualized Educational Training Plan (IETP) for each student.

In addition, MPS partnership schools have been required to have an MPS licensed teacher in the program who is to provide instructional support and direction to non-licensed agency staff members.[8] This includes observing staff activities and providing any necessary assistance to ensure that the instructional services provided by these staff are consistent with MPS educational standards.[9]

MPS also assigns to its partnership schools a social worker and a school psychologist, usually for one half-day per week. Books and other instructional materials are supplied by MPS. Approximately 85% of alternative programs for high school students have their own entry requirements, in addition to "at-risk" eligibility requirements. These may include minimum age, a certain number of accumulated credits, gender (some schools serve only girls), reading level (some agencies will not take high school level students reading below the 5th grade level), acceptable behavior, etc.

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[8]. The salary of the MPS teacher is deducted from each MPS partnership school budget. Partnership schools also hire staff with funding derived from their MPS contracts.

[9]. See, again, Appendix B.

The educational performance of MPS partnership schools is measured against six general indicators: (1) Attendance Rate, (2) Enrollments, (3) Transferred of participants to other educational programs (positive outcomes), (4) Retention (i.e., continuing enrollment), (5) Diploma attainment, and (6) Negative terminations.[10]

The MPS Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development is the office responsible for coordination, staff inservice, and supervision of classes taught by MPS teachers. Evaluation of MPS teachers is done by principals and administrators of MPS schools matched to each of the MPS partnership sites. Program evaluation is done by the DAPMD with assistance from the MPS Department of Research and Program Assessment.

* * *

WHY THE NEED FOR A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF MPS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

The rising concern over limited resources, Board and school district accountability, and the *notion that because of the new Discipline Policy* MPS may place more of its behaviorally problematic at-risk students in alternative schools, have focused new attention on the MPS partnership school network.

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[10]. Appendix B also describes the measurable objectives associated with each of these indicators. As per state statutes, secondary level programs for at-risk students must ensure that the average daily attendance of their students is at least 70%; that at least 70% of the students are retained; that 70% of participating seniors earn a high school diploma; and at least 70% show significant improvements in reading and math.

During the fall of 1991, organizational and budget reviews of the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development revealed that, annually, over five million dollars were being spent on both community- and MPS-based alternative programs. Yet, the Board had seen only attendance and retention statistics on these programs, two self-reported outcome indicators which are unreliable measures of academic success. As a matter of policy, this means that: (1) the Board has been placing young people in non-public school settings they knew little about, possibly abdicating their statutory obligation to provide them with education leading to high school completion; and, (2) it has been approving large public expenditures without critically assessing the ability of service providers (in this case the partnership schools) to deliver quality educational services to at-risk students, or if MPS procurement procedures are being followed when these programs are funded.

Comments made by MPS Board members during their late fall of 1991 Committee discussions on alternative schools, seemed to question the meaningfulness of previous program evaluations that relied primarily on selected outcome indicators (i.e., the number of students assigned and served by alternatives, their average monthly attendance, how long students are retained in the system, etc.). Some Board members felt that these indicators could neither assure them nor the public that at-risk children in alternative/partnership settings are <u>not</u> the recipients of a second rate system of education; and that, as individual Board members, they lacked the tools and the data to determine for themselves the effectiveness of the partnership schools seeking resources from the district.

It is in this context that this evaluation evolved.

METHODOLOGY AND PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THIS EVALUATION

Evaluation Design

There was a dual purpose to this evaluation: (1) to provide school district officials with a qualitative overview of the partnership school network that can be used to improve the quality of educational services to at-risk students assigned to these schools, and (2) to provide each partnership school participating in the study with a critical assessment of their programs.[11]

A general description of the evaluation design, the methodology used to collect and analyze data, and the primary focus of this evaluation follows.

Research/Evaluation Teams

Three teams, under the direction of a team leader, conducted site visits to collect data. Each team was composed of representatives from MPS, a CBO staff representative, educational consultants, and a student.[12]

The research/evaluation teams included:

* *Administrative Compliance Team*

  This team collected data on the agency's organizational structure; personnel and operational procedures; the adequacy of the agency's reporting to

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11. At the conclusion of this evaluation, the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development will discuss with each MPS partnership school specific findings relative to their performance and the corrective actions to be taken.

12. See list of evaluation team members included with the appendices.

MPS, students' IETP's, and the agency's self-evaluation systems; its fiscal reporting systems and its use of MPS funds; compliance with MPS administrative assurances and contract stipulations; and compliance with building codes.

* *Curriculum Compliance Team*

This team collected data on compliance with DPI and MPS curriculum standards, and with related contract stipulations; the adequacy of the program's instructional design; and the qualifications of staff as it relates to matters of certification and preparation. The team also randomly reviewed students' IETP's and portfolios, and made observations on the adequacy of instructional materials and facilities.

* *Organizational Culture and Ambience Team*

This team made observations on the partnership schools' ambient and "culture," as these affect the delivery of educational services to at-risk students. Confidential one-on-one taped interviews were conducted with a random selection of students and staff at each participating partnership school using instruments prepared for this study. There were "*focus group*" interviews with students, and random interviewing of parents. Observations were also recorded on the adequacy of facilities, the quality of the interactions between staff and students, and the adequacy and authenticity of the agency's support for the program.

Qualitative Approach

This evaluation differed from previous MPS studies of alternative/partnership schools in that it draws from

qualitative and ethnographic methodologies in the tradition of Miles and Huberman (1984), Goetz (1981), Glazer and Strauss (1970), Le Compte (1982), Yin et al, 1978, and Cook and Campbell (1984). Baseline data collected on each community-based alternative also focused on the agency's history of educational involvement in the community, its governance and policy-making practices, its capacity to deliver alternative educational services, the characteristics of its student body and staff, its facilities and financial resources, and its history of educational effectiveness with at-risk students, including students' attendance, performance, and persistence data. Guided by Miles and Huberman (1984), the three research teams also collected a wealth of ethnographic data via on-site observations of bounded samples, informant interviews, and observations of the effects of the culture of interaction between students and staff, and students and ambience.

Instrumentation and Interviews

Instrumentation used in this evaluation followed closely methods delineated in Wehlage et al (1989), Miles and Huberman (1984), and Le Compte (1982) to ensure maximum levels of validity and reliability of the data collected. Research questions and outcome measures were determined via a review of the current literature on at-risk youth. Because of the unique purpose of this evaluation, research instruments used by the ***Administrative Compliance*** and ***Curriculum Compliance*** teams were customized to facilitate a review of compliance with Section 118.153 of the Wisconsin Code and other MPS regulatory policies. Instrumentation for the ***Organizational Culture and Ambience Team*** had a qualitative emphasis and included a **Student Interview Instrument, a Student Focus Group Instrument, a Parent Interview Instrument, a Teacher Interview Instrument, a Support Staff Interview Instrument, a Director's Interview**

Instrument, and an Ambience and Facilities Observation Instrument. Questions and items in each instrument were designed with care to facilitate coding and cross comparisons, as well as validation of observations.

Approximately 176 students or 30.1% of those enrolled in the collaborating 11 partnership schools participated in one-on-one or group interviews. Also interviewed were forty-one teachers and support staff members, approximately 43 parents, and all agency (partnership school) directors.

Data Collection and Analysis

The three research teams visited each site on separate days to ensure multiple sets of independent observations. Teams collected and summarized data at the end of each day. At the end of all site visits, all teams met for two long days to thoroughly review, compare, and discuss their interviews, findings, and observations on each partnership school.

All completed instruments and written observations, including tape recordings of interviews, were submitted to the project's principal investigator at the end of each day for coding and transcribing. All transcriptions of interviews, baseline data on each of the partnership schools,[13] team members' reports of their visits, and notes on the two days of team de-briefings, are on file at La Causa, Inc., in the custody of the Principal Researcher.

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[13]. There were several MPS partnership schools which failed to submit the baseline data requested. Some of the gaps in their data file were bridged with baseline data extracted from *Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development* files. In some cases the failure to submit the data requested may have slightly distorted how the agency is represented in Table A of this report.

Partnership Schools Evaluated

As previously noted, 11 partnership schools participated in this first phase of the evaluation of MPS partnership schools.[14] Therefore, the successful practices and the findings discussed in this report are based on their evaluation.

Of the 950 students served by all MPS partnership schools during the 1991-92 school year, 579 (61%) were served by the 11 agencies evaluated, making this a very reliable student sample. Of the 579, approximately 408 (70.1%) were African American, 171 (29.5%) were of other ethnic/racial background, 38% were males, and 62% females.[15] The cumulative annual attendance for these students was 81.8%.[16]

The MPS partnership schools evaluated were geographically distributed throughout all major neighborhoods of the central city. At least 2 had a significant Hispanic population, 2 were mixed Hispanic and White, and 7 were predominantly African American.

Of the 11 programs evaluated, 6 were in multi-service community-based agencies and 5 were in agencies whose mission is primarily or solely educational. Figure 1 places these schools in one of two categories.

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[14]. Appendix A list the partnership schools that participated in this evaluation.

[15]. See Chart A: "Partnership Schools - Demographics."

[16]. See Chart B: "Partnership Schools - Attendance."

Figure 1

A COMPREHENSIVE MULTI-SERVICE SOCIAL AGENCIES	B EDUCATION AS PRIMARY OR SOLE MISSION
Career Youth Develop. Spanish Center Milwaukee Urban League Silver Spring/Turning Point Next Door/Cornerstone United Community Center	Shalom Milwaukee Spectrum Seeds of Health Learning Enterprises Aurora Weier

Thematic Format

A distinctive feature of qualitative research is the use of ***thematic formats*** (Miles and Huberman, 1984) to present evaluation findings. This approach allows for a more integrated, holistic and interconnected treatment of findings and recommendations. Following this method of presentation, this report discusses the findings, concerns, and recommendations that flow from the analysis of the qualitative data collected.

Via these thematic presentations successful partnership school practices, organizational issues, problem areas, and programmatic deficiencies found among the 11 MPS partnership schools evaluated are discussed, and various policy, compliance, and supervision and monitoring issues are highlighted.

To the extent possible, MPS should take into consideration the recommendations which follow the thematic discussions in designing school-by-school improvement and developmental plans, and in planning technical assistance for its partnership school network.

Chart A: "Partnership Schools - Demographics"

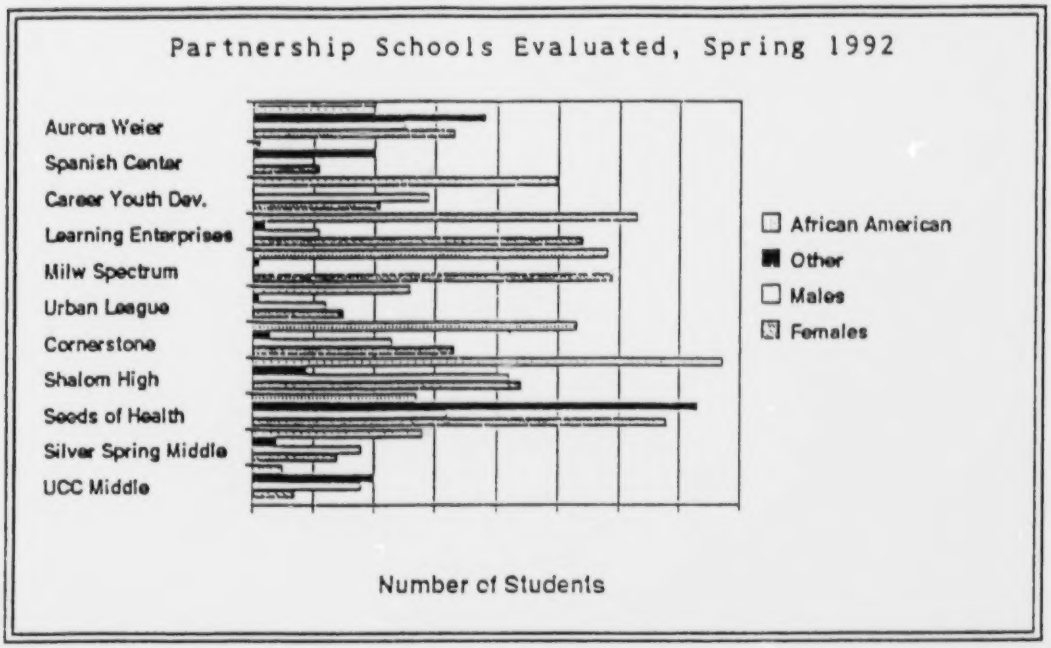
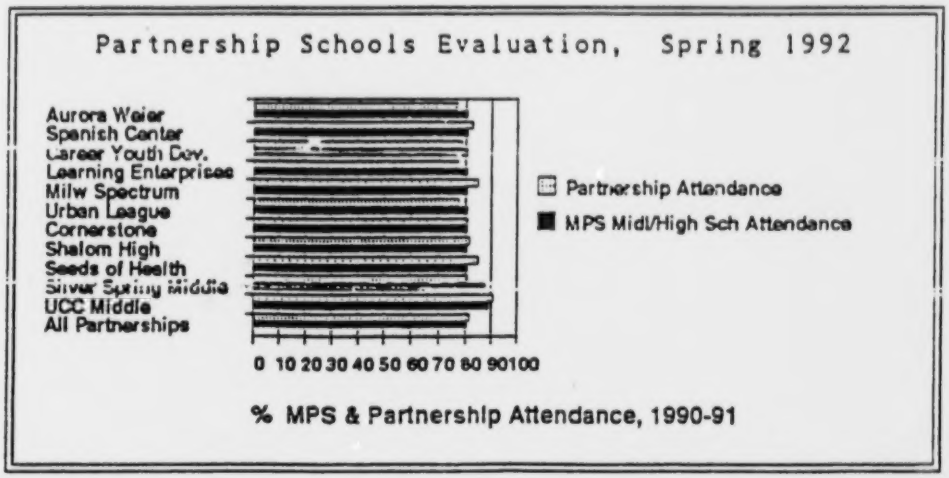


Chart B: "Partnership Schools - Attendance"



MAJOR FINDINGS, THEMES, COMMENTS, AND RECOMMEDATIONS

QUALITY AND EXTENT OF MPS MONITORING, SUPERVISION, AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

MPS Organizational Changes Which Affected Partnership Schools

During the 1991-92 school year, MPS made various changes in its administrative and organizational structure. These included the elimination of the district's five Service Delivery Areas (SDA's) during the summer of 1991, a shift in the organizational affiliation and purposes of the Comprehensive Support Center (CSC), and the restaffing of key administrators in the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development (DAPMD). These changes in turn contributed to changes in how students were to be assigned to alternative programs, and how MPS would interface with, supervise and monitor its partnership school network.

The assignment of Mr. Federico Zaragoza as Director of DAPMD, an educator with extensive experience working with CBO's, led to a significant increase in the number of contracted seats with community-based alternatives. Mr. Zaragoza also improved organizational support and programmatic relationships with the MPS partnership network, initiated this evaluation, began the process of redefining the role of the CSC, and changed the funding of MPS partnership schools from a practice of year-to-year contract renewal to a competitive process based on submission and review of proposals prepared as per specifications delineated in a Request for Proposal (RFP). In early July 1992, Mr. Zaragoza left MPS and moved to a cabinet position with Milwaukee County.

During his tenure with the DAPMD Mr. Zaragoza was a strong advocate of MPS partnership schools. He sought administrative and MPS Board support and additional funding for these programs, and made various successful attempts at improving communications between MPS and the partnership schools. However, because of his short tenure with the Department, he was unable to further enhance its staffing and its articulation with other MPS departments.

Flow of Information

During the interviews, most of the MPS partnership schools evaluated reported that there continues to be a poor flow of information between partnership schools and

the MPS departments which are supposed to interface with them; that the relationship between district and MPS partnership staff continues to be defined as "them" versus "us;" that supervision of MPS teachers stationed at the partnership schools is seriously lacking; and that MPS services which should be use to improve educational opportunities for students at MPS partnership schools, are not being fully accessed either because of lack of information at the partnership school level or due to logistical difficulties.

These deficiencies in the relationship between the school district and its partnership schools were well documented in interviews with MPS teachers and MPS partnership school staff. For instance, key instructional staff in about half of the MPS partnership schools evaluated knew very little about support services and instructional resources available to their students via MPS. They also rated as "poor" the type of inservice and instructional support they receive from the school district. Team members noted, however, that in MPS partnership schools where instructional staff and agency leadership work closely together, there is a greater awareness and use of MPS resources.

MPS Teacher Supervision and Contract Issues

MPS teachers in most of the partnership schools reported that they rarely see their supervisors, and that they receive almost no guidance from MPS supervisory personnel on instructional matters. Not one of the teachers interviewed reported that they had been formally evaluated by their supervisors.

Another theme that emerged from interviews with partnership school leadership relates to how the MPS Teacher's Contract affects how MPS teachers function within the MPS partnership school. MPS teachers are supposed to follow the MPS calendar and the workload specifications delineated in the contract, and are paid under the MPS salary scale.[17]

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[17]. Another category of instructional staff are agency hired employees who work with the same student population and may teach comparable courses, presumably, under the guidance of the MPS certified teacher(s). As a rule, agency staff are paid less -- often much less than the MPS teacher--, work more hours per week,

Generally, MPS teachers work well with partnership school staff. Interviews revealed, however, that when the conduct or performance of the MPS teacher requires employment action, there is an ambivalence to act on the part of both the MPS partnership school and MPS administrators. For example, in 3 of the 11 partnership schools, evaluation team members noted that there are differences between certain MPS teachers and the agency which are adversely affecting the instructional component of the program, as well as students' disposition to remain in the program. In these agencies, tensions between the agency director (and often other agency staff) and the MPS teacher run high. Yet, in all three cases, there has been a hesitancy to act to correct the problem. Unless MPS acts jointly with the affected MPS partnership school to correct this problem, students returning to their alternative school sites in September of 1992 may again suffer from this situation.

Inadequate Facilities

The problem of inadequate partnership school facilities also surfaced as a major theme. Rutter *et al* (1984) point to the importance of pleasant and comfortable school conditions when working with youth who have already been the victims of neglect in other settings. Kozol (1991) talks about the negative message we send to youth who have to endure an ambience of despair in the communities they come from and in their school setting. Evaluation team members found that in at least 5 of the 11 MPS partnership schools evaluated, there were either potential building code and fire violations, or problems related to the safety of the physical plant, or with the cleanliness of the space used for instructional purposes, lunch, and laboratories. In three of the five, the space allocated for the MPS program was woefully inadequate for the number of students assigned to the program. Team members, students, teachers, and parents interviewed found unacceptable the conditions in some of these schools, and were very troubled by the school district's neglectful conduct.

Evaluation team members recognized that there can be no expectation of total comparability between MPS school buildings and the facilities occupied by most community-based organizations --especially in the case of agencies with lesser resources operating in poverty stricken areas

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and the full fiscal year.

of the central city. But, as one team member put it, "even old and physically inadequate buildings can be kept clean."

To the credit of 3 of the partnership schools with deficient physical plant, they have been working to move their programs to new facilities in the fall of 1992.

There was lots of discussion by evaluation team members on the issue of facilities. The case was made by one team member that education is a process which needs to be evaluated in terms of its substance, not its facilities. But, the literature on at-risk students and on successful schools is full of examples which illustrate why relegating poor and minority students (who happen to be the *majority* in MPS partnership schools) to facilities perceived by them as "ugly," "dirty," and "depressing" (to use the terms used by some of the students interviewed during this evaluation) contributes to their anger against schools and society, and to their consequential loss of interest in learning.

As in the Phi Delta Kappa (1980) study, teacher and staff satisfaction in most MPS partnership schools with physical plant deficiencies is also negatively affected by unsafe, dirty, and depressive conditions. Interviews suggested that if students and staff *think* that the program they are in is "a school," then there is an "equating" of "a school" to its "building." The research literature suggests that in these cases "inputs" are significant variables in the perceptions students and staff develop of how they are perceived or treated. Most evaluation team members, parents, students, and staff interviewed were of one voice on the following issue: There cannot be any rationalization for inadequate and dirty facilities.

Student Referral and Placement Process

Concerns were voiced relative to how students are referred and/or placed at MPS partnership schools. In the past, an at-risk student's request for an alternative setting was processed by the CSC. There they were assessed and provided with an orientation to their educational options by staff that generally knew the schools in the MPS partnership schools network. This changed during the 1991-92 school year. Schools can now make their own referrals to community-based MPS partnership schools, and the district's Student Services staff can place students wherever there are vacancies in the partnership network. Some of the

students and parents interviewed stated that they were sent by MPS counselors and "Central Office" staff to their current alternative school without any orientation to or knowledge of the type of program they were being sent to. Incidents were reported where students were released from their MPS school and send to an MPS partnership site where there was no room for them; on other occasions, students have been referred to MPS partnership schools that were incompatible with their specific needs.

MPS partnership school teachers and staff also complained that they received students half-way through the year with inadequate records and, generally, no information on the students' academic status. This makes the development of students' IETP's difficult. It also frustrates students who want to know exactly what they need to complete high school but cannot get reliable information to decide what course of study to follow.

Fiscal and Administrative Reporting

Another theme flowing from this review relates to the ability of MPS partnership schools to keep up with fiscal and administrative reporting requirements of the school district. Several of the MPS partnership schools evaluated are in need of more clarity and direction in the handling of their fiscal and managerial obligations.

They also need technical assistance in the development of programmatic, operational, and compliance plans, and in designing and implementing data collection and evaluation procedures. There is no consistency in how data is being collected for MPS reporting purposes. This cuts into the reliability of the data reported and makes difficult agency-by-agency and aggregate analysis of data.

Commentary and Recommendations

The DAPMD is charged with a challenging and demanding task. It is responsible for a student population the size of a typical school district in other parts of Wisconsin.[18] It has to be accountable to MPS, and has direct and

[18]. MPS figures for the 1991-92 put the number of students in the alternative school network at 2,602. A proposal for an expansion of the alternative programs intended to meet expected

indirect obligations to Milwaukee taxpayers, the county, the state and the federal government. These responsibilities require sufficient professional staff if the Department is to ensure quality control of all the initiatives it coordinates, and if it is to work towards greater integration and articulation of MPS partnership schools with MPS so as to bring an end to the "them" vs. "us" dichotomy previously discussed in this report.

The DAPMD also needs sufficient fiscal and personnel resources --or access to human resources in other MPS departments-- to provide appropriate technical assistance to MPS partnership schools.

The issues discussed in this section of the report suggest deficiencies in the operational relationship between the Milwaukee Public Schools and its network of partnership schools which need to be immediately corrected. MPS needs to strengthen its internal systems so that it can institute effective access, monitoring, and support systems for its partnership schools, and so it can ensure that at-risk students are able to study in safe, clean, and reasonably comfortable environments. To accomplish these tasks, the following is recommended:

1. The Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development should work jointly with other MPS administrative units, and with representatives from MPS partnership schools, to ensure that

   a. Appropriate procedures are in place for the referral, assessment, and placement of students in partnership schools;

   b. MPS partnership school staff are adequately informed about MPS instructional support resources they can access to improve services to their students;

   c. MPS teachers and other MPS partnership school staff are adequately supervised, evaluated, and connected to appropriate MPS staff development opportunities;

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demand during the 1992-93 school year, if implemented, could take the number of students to 3,898. These figures do not include the early childhood programs and other community-based programs administered and supervised by this Department.

d. Review criteria is set for periodic on-site visits to partnership schools by MPS administrative teams to monitor compliance with curriculum and building codes. Visiting teams should ensure that a reasonable standard of cleanliness is adhered to by MPS partnership schools in space designated for the instruction of MPS students.

2. To help implement recommendation #1 above, the DAPMD should develop a procedural manual for MPS partnership schools which informs agency heads, the MPS teacher, and other staff about MPS instructional and support services. A copy of this manual should be made available to <u>each</u> MPS partnership school staff member.

3. The DAPMD should meet periodically with other MPS administrative/service units to update them on new developments in the implementation of MPS partnership school programs, and to work on improvements in student referral, assessment, and placement procedures, as needed.

4. The DAPMD should create a special committee comprised of MPS partnership school representatives, MPS administrators, and MTEA officials to review and, if necessary, recommend to the MPS Board modifications to contractual specifications affecting MPS partnership schools. This special committee should develop appropriate procedures for (1) the selection, assignment, and transfer of teachers to partnership schools, (2) the supervision and evaluation of these teachers, and (3) their transfer out of MPS partnership schools if and when it is determined that incompatibilities between the MPS teacher(s) and the MPS partnership school are working against students' academic interests. Appropriate ***grievance*** procedures should also be set so that MPS and agency staff have a mechanism available for the resolution of differences or tensions between staff, between staff and the agency, and between staff and MPS.

5. MPS should give greater clarity to the role and functions of the DAPMD, and to the role of each member of its administrative staff. It should also review the relationship of the DAPMD to other MPS divisions, departments, and programs to determine the level of authority and staffing needed by the Department to ensure that MPS students in MPS partnership settings are the recipients of quality education and equal educational opportunities.

6. MPS should also explore how it can help to improve the physical plant and instructional equipment of every MPS partnership school. MPS can collaborate with banks and other lenders in getting low interest short-term loans to MPS partnership schools for purposes of physical plant improvements, and to "re-tool" their computer and vocational equipment. This is a proposition that has been discussed before. It is important that MPS involve representation of MPS partnership schools in conceptualizing and operationalizing these ideas. An ad hoc committee could be created comprised of representatives from MPS, its partnership schools network, and lending institutions to develop recommendations on how best to accomplish the above.

* * *

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES IN MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

Most Successful Partnership Schools

Figure 1 on page 18 of this report, divides the 11 partnership schools evaluated into two groups: (1) programs in Column A are located in comprehensive multi-service social agencies, and programs in Column B are in agencies whose primary or sole mission is the education of young people. It is instructive to note that of the 5 programs listed in Figure 1, Column B of page 18, four of them are the most popular among the students and staff interviewed (and were identified as most successful among evaluation team members). Generally, in these programs, (1) there is more staff and student participation in program matters, (2) their staff works collaboratively and gives substantial attention to improving and enhancing the content of their instructional program, (3) staff experiment with diverse and innovative curricula, (4) staff is experienced with alternative education for at-risk students and knowledgeable about the support services that work for them, (5)

student and other records are orderly and complete, (6) authentic assessment of students is adequate, and (7) their financial records generally show that agency resources and MPS dollars "follow" the students.

The above is not to say that all alternative programs located within comprehensive multi-service social agencies (Figure 1, Column A, page 18) were found to be unsuccessful. At least two of them engage in as many successful practices as the majority of the programs in Column B. The rest of the agencies in Column A hold some promise of improving the quality of their programs. They could be good alternative schools if their leadership takes to heart the findings of this evaluation and work to improve them.

Good Curriculum and Teaching

In at least 6 of the 11 MPS partnership schools evaluated, evaluators found a structured and well articulated curriculum which is implemented by courses and activities that excite students and staff alike. In 3 of these 6 schools, students can take a variety of interesting courses which incorporate cultural diversity and issues of social relevance, and which prepare students for post high school education or job training. Most of these schools also have courses that help students cope with developmental needs and self-exploration (Lipsitz, 1984, identifies this as an indispensable feature of successful secondary schools). The predominant mode of curriculum delivery in most of these schools is group instruction, not individualized tutorials. Individualized help is offered to reinforce content knowledge taught in the classroom.

Evaluation team members also observed very good and excellent teaching going on. In at least 4 of the 6 schools, team members observed teachers who were models of excellence in the teaching of science, psychology, history,

and math. Students interviewed pointed to these teachers as positive role models, a factor Whelage *et al.* (1989) found to be critical in the makeup of effective schools for at-risk youth.

One of these schools has a competency-based curriculum so well articulated that even a casual visitor to the school can read it on display on the walls. Students at this school know what they need to complete their program, and spoke eloquently about future careers.

Another school stands out because it develops critical thinking in students. In this school, students, teachers, and staff regularly discuss complex and abstract ideas; they have a list of 300 competencies they must master to graduate; they defend the acquisition of academic and analytical skills by making them applicable to social reality; and they defend their right to graduate before a committee of students, teachers and community representatives.

In another school, students reinforce the knowledge they acquired in classroom situations via the use of computers, in a well organized, clean, and well supervised lab full of computers purchased with agency funds generated from MPS and other contracts.

In another school students, teachers/staff, and parents go camping together during the summer to "develop family" and discuss expectations. Students and staff love this activity and find that it helps to dispose students to learning.

Again, in all of these "more successful" schools there are small student-teacher ratios; MPS and other funds clearly "follow" the students; and most have ongoing teacher/staff planning and developmental activities.

Critical Mass

This evaluation also found that MPS partnership schools are more likey to engage in more of the successful practices identified in **Table A**, and are more positively perceived by students, when their enrollments approached a "critical mass" (at least 45-50 students). MPS partnership schools with a "critical mass" are fiscally able to afford several teachers trained in different content areas and with different teaching expertise. This makes possible a more diversified knowledge base among staff and a more diverse curriculum and program organization. A larger enrollment also provides the MPS partnership school with additional resources to hire more instructional support staff, to make physical plant improvements, or purchase classroom technology. These positive attributes were not *generally* found among partnership schools with small enrollments.

Family Ethos

Evaluators noted that most of the 11 MPS partnership schools are very good at creating a "family" atmosphere. Most of these schools also put a lot of emphasis on building students' self-esteem and counseling students on future careers and job opportunities. With a few exceptions, they also treat students with care and respect. However, in at least 6 of the MPS partnership schools evaluated, these constructs and practices, by themselves, or even when combined with each other, do not correlate positively with students' academic competence and confidence levels --or with the students' belief that they are being challenged and/or prepared for post-high school education. In several of these schools students spoke highly of how well staff treated them, then candidly pointed out that they were not learning much, or that the content they are being taught is not "high school" (level), or that it's "too easy" and "dumb."

In other words, it is instructive to note that for most at-risk students in 6 of the 11 schools, a "caring, loving, and safe environment" does not necessarily translate into academic success. However, in MPS partnership schools where the ***"caring"*** factors exist together with high academic standards, good teaching, positive and meaningful relations between staff and students, and challenging and engaging academic work, many students radiate a feeling of academic competence, and they show confidence in their ability to successfully pursue additional education and employment training. This combination of factors is supported by the research literature as an indication of future social and academic success (see, among others, Phi Delta Kappa Study, 1980; Lipsitz, 1984; Wehlage *et al.*, 1989; Fine, 1991).

Attendance

The ***Children At-Risk Legislation*** requires improved student attendance as an outcome indicator in MPS partnership schools. Regarding this indicator, this evaluation found it very significant that partnership schools do as well or better --in many cases-- than MPS Middle Schools and High Schools.[19] Most of the schools evaluated appeared to have made great strides in substantially increasing the school attendance of youth who, before they were placed at the alternative site, were truant or already dropouts. It is unlikely that an MPS school would have as successful a record of student attendance with at-risk students and chronic disrupters as most of the 11 MPS partnerships evaluated. This is due in part to the fact that most MPS partnership schools have staff designated to monitor the individual attendance of their students, and they are doing a very good job of it.

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[19]. As was suggested by several evaluation team members, it is possible that the self-reported attendance data of a few of the MPS partnership schools evaluated is not verifiable, and therefore suspect.

However, although most students interviewed spoke about how their attendance has improved (and parent interviews helped to verify this), in MPS partnership schools with a weak instructional component, improved attendance does not translate into a feeling of improved academic competence among at-risk students. For example, in certain schools with more than 80% attendance, students still spoke about how they are not learning much and about not being challenged.

Safety and Ambience

In his research on effective schools, Ron Edmonds (1979) stressed the importance of a clean and secure environment. Four of the 11 partnership schools evaluated were found deficient on the cleanliness variable. Yet, interviews revealed that almost all of them were ***safe, violence-free*** environments.[20] With the exception of 2 schools, where the personal safety of a few students was a concern (mostly because of the neighborhood and youth gang activity), students expressed great relief about the absence of student-on-student violence. In these schools, students believe they do not have to worry about being physically assaulted by fellow students or getting into fights. Most students interviewed felt that these schools are more violence-free than the MPS schools they previously attended, in spite of the fact that most are located in poor neighborhoods plagued by social ills.

In most of the MPS partnership schools evaluated there is an ambience where students learn how to respect each

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[20]. This report distinguishes between personally feeling *safe* in a violent-free environment, and safety issues related to the condition of physical plant. In at least 5 of the 11 schools evaluated, students felt good about the violence-free environment, but complained about the inadequacy and unsafe features of the physical plant of their particular partnership school.

other and their teachers, and how to interact more positively with students of other races, gender, and social background. Most also provide student support, self-esteem and awareness building activities. These activities correlate positively with *violence-free* partnership schools.

Identification of Successful Practices

It speaks highly of MPS partnership schools that, in spite of limited resources, limited staff, and often inadequate facilities, there are schools among the 11 evaluated where there is a real sense of "family," where relatively good education is taking place, and where students are truly involved in meaningful educational activities.

This evaluation found that there are instructional and programmatic "practices" currently use by MPS partnership schools which contribute --in one way or another-- to their relative effectiveness. Table A identifies 51 of them.[21] These "successful practices" flow from an analysis of the qualitative data collected for this evaluation. The list may not be all inclusive, but it is significant to note that most of the successful attributes identified are remarkably similar to the attributes identified in the research literature on effective and successful schools.[22]

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[21]. A risk of erring is taken when values are assigned to cells in Table A. However, it is an exercise that can be supported by the data collected, and it provides MPS and the MPS partnership schools with a third party qualitative indicator of performance. Some MPS partnership school leadership may take issue with how they are represented in Table A. It is advisable that they not take this as an indictment of their program, but, rather, as an assessment suggestive of the need for programmatic improvement.

[22]. See bibliography for titles on various reviews of effective education programs.

MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS' EVALUATION, SPRING 1992											TABLE A
PRACTICES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS IN PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS											
	Partnership Schools *										
	AWEC	Sp.Ctr	CYDL	EW	Spec	UrbL	CLC	Shiom	Seeds	SSNC	UCC
Practices Which Contribute to Success in Partnership Schools											
The primary mission of the agency is the education of young people	4	2	3	4	5	2	4	5	5	3	3
Staff and students feel that there are high expectations of them	1	2	1	4	4	1	3	5	4	4	2
Head of school/agency is also the Instructional Leader of the program	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	5	5	0	0
Financial records show that MPS funding clearly follows the students	4	2	1	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	1
Teachers have access to adequate instructional materials	3	3	2	5	4	2	4	4	5	4	3
Teachers/staff use and connect students to community resources	2	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
There is a clearly articulated, structured and focused full-day curriculum	2	2	1	5	5	1	4	5	5	4	2
Curriculum is content-specific, holistic, relevant, fun, and culturally-based	2	2	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	2
Students feel basic skills in reading, writing, & math are effectively taught	2	3	2	4	4	1	4	5	4	4	2
The principal mode of teaching is group instruction, not individual tutorials	4	3	2	4	5	1	5	5	4	4	3
There are computers available and used for instructional support	3	1	1	5	3	1	5	3	5	0	3
Staff collaboratively develop and articulate curriculum & school projects	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	5	5	3	3
Staff have dedicated time during summer for curriculum development	2	1	1	3	3	0	3	5	5	3	1
Staff is reflective of racial/ethnic makeup of the student body	4	1	5	4	2	5	5	3	3	4	2
There are small ratios of students to teacher in most classrooms	4	1	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	1
There are more than two teachers working as a team	3	0	3	4	4	2	4	5	5	4	0
MPS teacher(s) are truly part of a team with partnership school staff	2	4	3	3	4	1	5	5	5	4	4
All staff are periodically evaluated by the Instructional Leader	3	0	1	4	4	1	4	5	4	4	0
Classroom Teachers are supported by paraprofessionals or volunteers	3	3	2	3	3	1	4	5	4	4	4
Staff development is an integral part of instructional program	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	5	5	3	2
Staff are provided adequate preperation and planning time	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
Teachers' are primarily assigned to teach in areas of content expertise	2	3	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	2
There is staff and teacher satisfaction	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4
Teachers and staff have a genuine sense of empowerment	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2
There is authentic student assessment; student must "earn" credits	3	2	2	4	4	1	3	4	4	3	1
Students' Individualized Educational/Training Plans are up to date	3	4	2	5	4	2	3	4	4	3	1
Students are given meaningful homework , regularly	2	2	1	4	4	1	2	3	3	3	1
Critical thinking skills are taught across the curriculum	2	1	1	4	4	1	3	5	4	3	2
Students feel they are being prepared for further/higher education	1	2	2	5	4	1	3	5	4	3	2
Students radiate competence, and feel confident about higher education	1	2	1	5	4	1	3	5	4	3	1
Students are involved in extra-curricular and/or community events	3	1	3	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4
Students and staff feel part of a "family;" & there is self-esteem building	2	3	3	4	3	2	5	4	4	4	4
Students feel that staff cares about them and treat them with respect	2	5	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	3	3
Students feel there are adults who can serve as positive role models	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3
Students know what they need to graduate and how to achieve it	2	4	2	5	4	2	4	5	4	2	2
Students are counseled on job, careers, & college opportunities	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Students are provided comprehensive non-instructional support services	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
Students are provided with employment opportunities	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	4
Students are connected to community projects and other resources	2	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	4
Students understand discipline procedure & believe it's applied fairly	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	2	2
Students help set & implement discipline procedure & other school policy	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	5	3	0	0
There are several dedicated classrooms , study & relaxing area	0	1	2	4	4	2	0	3	4	3	2
There is a dedicated and clean lunch area	3	1	1	4	4	2	0	3	4	3	4
Students and staff feel physically safe in school setting	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	2
There are no physical plant, city or fire code violations	2	3	2	4	4	1	2	3	4	4	4
Students feel physical facilities are clean and comfortable	2	2	0	4	4	2	1	3	5	3	4
There is agency commitment to & ongoing improvement of facilities	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	5	4	5
Parents are kept informed of student progress and attendance	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4
Parents are involved in school instructional activities	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's academic activities	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	3
Most parents believe their children are receiving a good education	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3
	125	120	116	202	190	101	175	213	211	170	127
TOTAL SCORE :											
(Give each item a 0-5 value, 5 highest value. Score cannot exceed 255 points.)											
* For a list of the partnership schools that participated in this evaluation, see Appendix A.											
Note: The 51 successful practices listed above were identified during this evaluation. There may be partnership schools with low scores on this grid which report successful program outcomes, as per chapter 118.153. The inconsistencies between quantitative measures of success and the qualitative indicators on this grid suggest a need for other ways of measuring the effectiveness of partnership schools.											
File: Charcbo8.wks Tony Baez, June 1992											

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MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS ' EVALUATION SPRING 1992 — **TABLE A**

PRACTICES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS IN PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

	Partnership Schools *													
	AWE	Sp. C	CYDL	EW	Spec	Urbi	CLC	Shio	See	SSN	UCC			
Practices Which Contribute to Success in Partnership Schools												Ave.	STD	Var.
Students are counseled on job, careers, & college opportunities	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0
Students are provided comprehensive non-instructional support services	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.8	0.39	0.15
Parents are involved in school instructional activities	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	0.43	0.18
Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's academic activities	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	0.43	0.18
Students feel there are adults who can serve as positive role models	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3.7	0.45	0.2
Parents are kept informed of student progress and attendance	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3.9	0.51	0.26
Students are provided with employment opportunities	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2.7	0.62	0.38
Students are connected to community projects and other resources	2	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	2.9	0.67	0.45
Most parents believe their children are receiving a good education	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.3	0.75	0.56
Teachers/staff use and connect students to community resources	2	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.4	0.77	0.6
Staff are provided adequate preparation and planning time	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	3.5	0.78	0.61
There is agency commitment to & ongoing improvement of facilities	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	5	4	5	3.9	0.79	0.63
Teachers' are primarily assigned to teach in areas of content expertise	2	3	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	2	3.2	0.83	0.69
Teachers and staff have a genuine sense of empowerment	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	2.8	0.83	0.69
There is staff and teacher satisfaction	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	3.6	0.88	0.78
Students feel that staff cares about them and treat them with respect	2	5	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.6	0.88	0.78
Students and staff feel physically safe in school setting	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	2	3.4	0.89	0.79
Students and staff feel part of a "family;" & there is self-esteem building	2	3	3	4	3	2	5	4	4	4	4	3.5	0.89	0.79
Teachers have access to adequate instructional materials	3	3	2	5	4	2	4	4	5	4	3	3.5	0.99	0.98
Students are involved in extra-curricular and/or community events	3	1	3	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	3.5	0.99	0.98
There are no physical plant, city or fire code violations	2	3	2	4	4	1	2	3	4	4	4	3	1.04	1.09
Classroom Teachers are supported by paraprofessionals or volunteers	3	3	2	3	3	1	4	5	4	4	4	3.3	1.05	1.11
The primary mission of the agency is the education of young people	4	2	3	4	5	2	4	5	5	3	3	3.6	1.07	1.14
Students are given meaningful homework , regularly	2	2	1	4	4	1	2	3	3	3	1	2.4	1.07	1.14
Students understand discipline procedure & believe it's applied fairly	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	2	2	3.6	1.07	1.14
There is authentic student assessment; student must "earn" credits	3	2	2	4	4	1	3	4	4	3	1	2.8	1.11	1.24
Students' Individualized Educational/Training Plans are up to date	3	4	2	5	4	2	3	4	4	3	1	3.2	1.11	1.24
Staff collaboratively develop and articulate curriculum & school projects	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	5	5	3	3	3.3	1.14	1.29
There are small ratios of students to teacher in most classrooms	4	1	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	1	3.3	1.14	1.29
Students feel basic skills in reading, writing, & math are effectively taught	2	3	2	4	4	1	4	5	4	4	2	3.2	1.19	1.42
Staff development is an integral part of instructional program	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	5	5	3	2	3.2	1.19	1.42
Students know what they need to graduate and how to achieve it	2	4	2	5	4	2	4	5	4	2	2	3.3	1.21	1.47
The principal mode of teaching is group instruction, not individual tutorials	4	3	2	4	5	1	5	5	4	4	3	3.6	1.23	1.5
MPS teacher(s) are truly part of a team with partnership school staff	2	4	3	3	4	1	5	5	5	4	4	3.6	1.23	1.5
Curriculum is content-specific, holistic, relevant, fun, and culturally-based	2	2	1	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	2	2.9	1.24	1.54
Staff is reflective of racial/ethnic makeup of the student body	4	1	5	4	2	5	5	3	3	4	2	3.5	1.3	1.7
Critical thinking skills are taught across the curriculum	2	1	1	4	4	1	3	5	4	3	2	2.7	1.35	1.83
There is a dedicated and clean lunch area	3	1	1	4	4	2	0	3	4	3	4	2.6	1.37	1.87
Students feel they are being prepared for further/higher education	1	2	2	5	4	1	3	5	4	3	2	2.9	1.38	1.9
Staff and students feel that there are high expectations of them	1	2	1	4	4	1	3	5	4	4	2	2.8	1.4	1.97
There are several dedicated classrooms , study & relaxing area	0	1	2	4	4	2	0	3	4	3	2	2.3	1.42	2.02
Students feel physical facilities are clean and comfortable	2	2	0	4	4	2	1	3	5	3	4	2.7	1.42	2.02
Students radiate competence, and feel confident about higher education	1	2	1	5	4	1	3	5	4	3	1	2.7	1.54	2.38
Financial records show that MPS funding clearly follows the students	4	2	1	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	1	3.6	1.55	2.41
Students help set & implement discipline procedure & other school policy	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	5	3	0	0	1.4	1.55	2.41
Staff have dedicated time during summer for curriculum development	2	1	1	3	3	0	3	5	5	3	1	2.5	1.58	2.43
There is a clearly articulated, structured and focused full-day curriculum	2	2	1	5	5	1	4	5	5	4	2	3.3	1.6	2.56
There are more than two teachers working as a team	3	0	3	4	4	2	4	5	5	4	0	3.1	1.68	2.81
There are computers available and used for instructional support	3	1	1	5	3	1	5	3	5	0	3	2.7	1.71	2.93
All staff are periodically evaluated by the Instructional Leader	3	0	1	4	4	1	4	5	4	4	0	2.7	1.76	3.11
Head of school/agency is also the Instructional Leader of the program	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	5	5	0	0	2	2.22	4.91
TOTAL SCORE :	125	120	116	202	190	101	175	213	211	170	127	159	40.1	

(Give each item a 0-5 value, 5 highest value. Score cannot exceed 255 points.)

* For a list of the partnership schools that participated in this evaluation, see Appendix A.

Note: The 51 successful practices listed above were identified during this evaluation. There may be partnership schools with low scores on this grid which report successful program outcomes, as per chapter 118.153. The inconsistencies between quantitative measures of success and the qualitative indicators on this grid suggest a need for other ways of measuring the effectiveness of partnership schools.

File: Charcbo1.wks Tony Baez, June 1992

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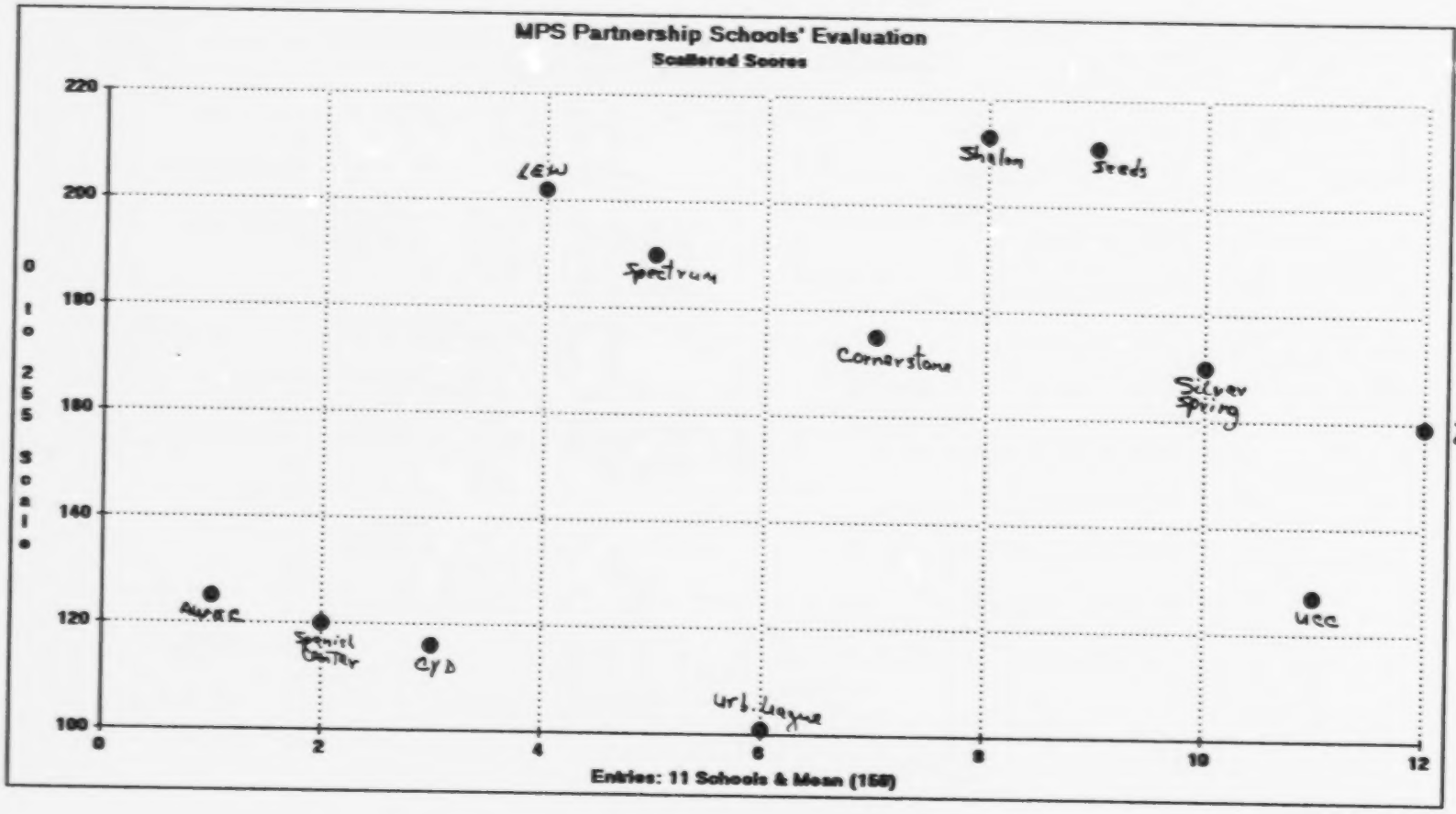

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Deficiencies Within Successful Partnership Schools

Evaluation teams found that a few of these relatively "successful" partnership schools have problems that need attention. Two are located in old facilities which may not stand a careful safety inspection. In one of these schools students complained that the facilities are, generally, not clean. Both of these MPS partnership schools have plans to move elsewhere.

In another school there appears to be some tension over matters of academic standards and expectations, and there is the perception among several students and teachers that the behavior of the partnership school administrator towards them has at times been disrespectful.

In another school there is one MPS teacher whose views do not appear to match philosophically and programmatically with the program and its students. This teacher should be reassigned elsewhere --but the MPS contract does not make this possible without the teacher's cooperation.

In one partnership school academic content and teaching is sound, but some evaluation team members felt that the school is neglecting to teach the ***social behaviors and interaction*** skills which racial minority group students -- in particular-- need to learn in order to successfully mediate "majority" controlled systems such as colleges, business and industrial work settings.

In another school evaluation team members felt that the academics are sound, but the ambience is too passive and students do not seem to be structurally engaged in the workings of the school.

In one school discipline was criticized by students and evaluation team members as too severe, and often unevenly discharged with respect to the girls.

In at least 3 of these schools evaluators noted that more racial minority staff is needed if cultural relevance is to take on its full meaning.

Surely, these matters need to be addressed. Yet, in most of these schools these deficiencies do not seem to interfere with an ambience where students feel that there is "family" and academic engagement, and students and teachers continue to work together to improve *"their"* school.

Commentary and Recommendations

Within their group, there are MPS partnership schools which are models of relative success, in spite of the deficiencies described in the section above. Students in these schools may not have access to the fiscal resources, the science and computer labs, and the advanced level courses that the children of more affluent parents have in many MPS and Milwaukee area suburban school districts. Yet, in spite of their limited resources, these MPS partnership schools enroll many at-risk students who would have been casualties of the public schools, and they change their attitudes about themselves, reengage them in learning, and give them hope.

Because MPS needs educational options and community-based alternatives like the ones described above for its large population of at-risk students, it would serve these students and the Milwaukee community well if successful partnership schools, as an incentive for further improvement, were provided with adequate resources by MPS and its community of benefactors (e.g., business and industry, area

colleges and universities, etc.). This could make accessible to the population of at-risk students attending these schools the same access to academic resources that other students have in secondary public schools. The MPS Board and Superintendent can help make this vision a reality by implementing the following:

1. During the fall of 1992, target for further improvement and support the most successful MPS partnership schools identified via this evaluation (see **Table A** for guidance in the selection of relatively successful schools).

   Establish a special ad hoc committee comprised of representatives of these schools (including students and parents), MPS officials (including Board members), representatives from area colleges and universities, and "educational experts." Charge this committee with the development of a plan to adequately fund physical plant and other improvements, curriculum enhancement, and staff development in the selected schools. The goal should be to have, by the fall of 1994, a network of ***successful*** MPS partnership schools operating as ***MPS Community-Based Specialty Options***.

   The Committee should submit its recommendations to the MPS Administration and Board in early Spring of 1993, so that recommendations with fiscal implications can be considered within the MPS budget development and approval process.

2. A team should be created comprised of teachers and other staff of relatively ***successful*** MPS partnership schools to provide technical assistance to teachers/staff in the less effective partnership schools during the 1992-93 school year. The team(s) should work with schools targeted for technical assistance by the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development. They

should visit the schools, meet with teachers and staff, and help them develop and implement an ***Instructional Improvement Plan***. Members of this team(s) should be treated as consultants to the school district and compensated accordingly.

3. As suggested in other sections of this report, MPS should work with area colleges and universities to identify faculty members or researchers who can work with MPS partnership school staff to do professional ***writeups*** of the most successful MPS partnership schools. These can then be widely distributed to help dismiss notions of the inferiority of partnership schools, and to provide guidance to other MPS partnership schools on how to implement instructional and managerial processes which lead to successful programs.

4. Early in the coming academic year, the DAPMD should assist successful MPS partnership schools in correcting the deficiencies identified in the discussion above.

5. The DAPMD should also assist these schools in the development of a program of paid community service internships for its successful students. Under this program --as an incentive--, students who show significant improvements in their academics can be paid a weekly part-time salary and assigned to work with community-based organizations in youth projects, in projects intended to revitalize neighborhoods, or they can be assigned as tutors to help teachers in Milwaukee's network of adult literacy programs. This project can connect students to meaningful leadership development activities, and generate in them civic responsibility and a social consciousness.

* * *

DEFICIENT MODELS, PROBLEM AREAS

Reliance on Remediation

Evaluation team members found that at least 5 of the 11 MPS partnership schools evaluated rely almost exclusively on a **"remedial"** basic skills curriculum. This ***deficit-model*** approach is made more pedagogically retarding in 4 of them where the delivery of instruction is primarily individualized, tutorial in nature, and lacking in focus and direction. Team members observed a lot of poor teaching in these schools and talked to students who said that during most of their class time teachers had them working on their own out of workbooks and worksheets. Interviews also revealed that rarely was subject-matter content taught in group settings, so as to allow students critical interaction and the development of analytical skills; and they noted that many teachers in these schools had no lesson plans or class objectives, presumably, because they "worked daily with students where they're at."

In several of these schools there is neither an articulated curriculum nor an articulated pedagogical purpose for the work assigned to students. In some it seems that students are just kept busy. Students in most of these schools complain that they are not being challenged, that "the stuff" is too easy, that "they give us fifth grade level work when this is supposed to be a high school," and that, "I've done more worksheets and coloring in this high school than in all my years in elementary school."

In several of these schools, the absence of a focused curriculum correlates positively with students' indispo-

sition to engage in academic work. During the interviews, some students told evaluators about waiting anxiously to leave their school after the lunch hour; others said that, when it comes to what is being taught and how, they see no difference between their alternative school and the MPS schools they had previously attended.

Discipline and "Control"

Another salient theme found in programmtically deficient partnership schools is an emphasis on the *"control"* of student behavior. The leadership and staff of many of these schools seems to believe that at-risk students are all *at-risk* because of unacceptable school and social behavior, and that their social and cultural background necessitates higher doses of "*good behavior moralizing*" and the imposition of lots of behavioral modification, if they are to succeed in school and society. Thus, unlike most of the more successful schools evaluated (where good student behavior positively correlates with an interesting curriculum, exciting instruction, and student participation in the development and implementation of discipline procedures and the operation of *their* school), most of the less successful schools resort to discipline procedures and monitoring practices that are restrictive and controlling. In these partnership schools students are assumed incapable of participating in the development and implementation of discipline procedures, or the operations of the school.

It should be noted that several of these schools do this (behavior control) with commendable caring and respect. However, in two of these schools, evaluation team members found discipline practices difficult to accept because of the frequency and severity of the punishment dished out to students. In one of these partnership schools, during the focus group interview, students talked angrily about

retaliatory action against staff members --if what they perceived to be abusive and disrespectful disciplinary treatment continues.

Evaluation team members also observed that, in spite of the deficiencies described in the preceding paragraphs, most students interviewed (in all but one of the 11 schools evaluated) spoke positively about staff caring and wanting the best for them, and of how they were much more respected and valued at their alternative school than at the public schools they previously attended. This is significant. These were mostly students who had negative experiences with adults in other school settings. To hear them speak positively about adults in their alternative school is a hopeful sign.

Commentary and Recommendations

During the interviews, it became clear that parents and students in the MPS partnership schools evaluated want a curriculum which is challenging; which gives them a sense of competence and academic confidence; which guarantees them graduation from high school; and which prepares them for jobs and/or higher education. Wehlage *et al.* (1989), Kozol (1991), Lipsitz (1984), Rutter *et al.*(1989), Fine (1991), and other researchers who have studied the characteristics of at-risk students and of secondary schools that are successful in meeting their educational needs, have found that at-risk youth tend to expect excellence from their schools. They may be in trouble with the ***system***, but they want to learn.

During this study, youth in MPS partnership programs told interviewers that they want both a quality instructional program and access to extracurricular opportunities available to other MPS students (e.g., physical education,

sports, proms, libraries, enrichment courses, etc.). This was true for all partnership schools evaluated.

If MPS partnership schools are to be "different" and "unique" in their program offerings, the research literature and this evaluation suggests that they do as follows:

1. Develop a content-specific, culturally, linguistically, and socially-relevant curriculum (Cummins, 1984) which is both challenging and rich in experiences likely to stimulate students' aspirations and interests (Wehlage *et al.*, 1989; Fine, 1991);

2. Ensure the sustainment of positive relationships between staff and students, a clean, pleasant, comfortable ambient, and a serious academic environment (Edmonds, 1979, Rutter *et al.*, 1979);

3. Respond appropriately to the physical and emotional developmental needs of students (Lipsitz, 1984);

4. Connect students to a vision of the transformation of their own neighborhood (Wilensky and Kline III, 1988);

5. Connect students to meaningful jobs which link them to community service and development (Banks *et al.*, 1991; Wehlage *et al.*, 1989);

6. Ensure high levels of parental contact with the school and meaningful parental involvement in school instructional activities (Phi Delta Kappa, 1980).

7. Explore specialization and/or limit instructional activity to more focused curriculum undertakings. For instance, some individual MPS partnership schools could specialize in any of the ***"specialties"*** described below:

* College Preparation: Schools with a rigorous academic curriculum intended to prepare students for college entry and the study of the professions;

* Occupational/Vocational Education: Schools with an emphasis on preparing students for entry in job training programs or technical and occupational collegiate level programs, such as those offered by the Milwaukee Area Technical College. These community-based schools could form partnerships with MATC to set up prep-tech curriculum and advanced placement in occupational training programs.

* Computer Specialties: These schools could focus on preparing students for various computer related employment opportunities.

* Multicultural/Bilingual Language Specialties: These schools can provide an important option for limited English proficient students in need of bilingual services, and also operate to develop bilinguality in students for future employment and academic use.

* Math or Science Specialties: These schools could develop rigorous programs in math and/or science to prepare students for both college and occupational or technologies training. These schools could develop partnerships with the business/industrial sector to prepare students for industrial jobs requiring high levels of math and/or science skills.

* Health Specialty: These schools could develop curriculum intended to expose students to the health professions and to prepare them with the courses they need to successfully enter training programs in the health professions. These schools can form partnerships with other CBO's specializing in the

field of health, area hospitals, MATC, UWM, and the Milwaukee County.

This evaluation has shown that there are schools in the MPS partnership network that meet many of the research-based characteristics of effectiveness and successful practices identified in Table A. However, in the case of those agencies or partnership schools with deficient programs, it is recommended that MPS do as follows:

1. Require each of these schools to develop an *Instructional Improvement Plan* which draws from and responds to the findings of this evaluation. These plans should be submitted to the Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development for review and approval.

2. The Department of Alternative Program Monitoring and Development, and the MPS Division of Curriculum, should provide MPS partnership schools with technical assistance in the development of the *Instructional Improvement Plan*, or can subcontract with educational experts to do so.

3. The DAPMD should work with these schools to further assess the compatibility of MPS teachers with the agency and its program. Where incompatibilities are found, MPS should act immediately to remove staff, if necessary.

4. The DAPMD should work closely with the leadership of these schools to develop a facilities improvement plan, wherever needed. It should also assist the agency in connecting to the resources of MPS, and those of the business/industry community, so that deficiencies in physical plant can be corrected no later than the end of the coming school year.

5. Because jobs are so important to many students in MPS partnership schools, the DAPMD should work with these schools and state, county, and city agencies, in the development of a youth job program and/or paid community service internships, to provide their students with community- and industry/business-based meaningful job opportunities.

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OTHER MAJOR THEMES AND PROBLEM AREAS

Absence of Multicultural Curriculum

Another curricular concern raised by evaluation team members is that, in spite of the stated promise of MPS partnership schools to deliver a socially and culturally relevant curriculum, in practice, less than half of the schools evaluated have a curriculum content, and/or specific courses, which ***meaningfully*** reflect the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population and the community they are located in. It was noted that staff in many of the MPS partnership schools, like in most MPS schools, have not been adequately prepared in the development of socially and culturally relevant curricular content and on its implementation.

Commentary and Recommendations

1. The DAPMD should collaborate with the MPS Division of Curriculum, educational consultants, and local community experts to provide partnership schools with technical assistance in the development of quality and meaningful multicultural curriculum.

2. A special one-day institute should be held in the Spring of 1993 on how to make the curriculum in MPS partnership schools more culturally inclusive and relevant. The DAPMD should seek resources to bring to the institute national and local experts on the subject. Subsequent to that, MPS should periodically offer workshops for partnership school staff on the same subject.

Perceptions Held of Community-Based Partnership Schools

Since they became another component of the MPS alternative delivery system MPS partnership schools have been identified with "at-risk" students, a label most people -- misleadingly-- associate with so-called "problem" youth, chronic disrupters, and students with other severe behavioral problems.[23] Yet, district data --and the pertinent research literature-- shows that a majority of at-risk students are not ***at-risk*** because of such behaviors. Many are at-risk because of socio-economic, family, or personal problems affecting their lives. Others are academically failing because schools have not responded effectively to their adolescent developmental needs (Lipsitz, 1984), or have failed to reengage them in the learning enterprise (Wehlage *et al.*, 1989).

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[23]. This creates a major dilemma for MPS partnership schools which have historically operated as ***alternatives*** to youth who didn't "fit" in traditional school settings. Beginning in the mid 1980's (when they began to receive new state resources directed at at-risk youth), most of the students these ***alternative schools*** had been serving all alone would be label as ***at-risk***, placing in a publicly negative light their once educationally progressive and academically commendable efforts. As MPS sought placements for chronic disrupters and for students in need of a behavioral reassignment, funds also became available for community-based alternatives that chose to house programs for these students. As a consequence, the general public tends to belief that all community-based alternatives only serve these "type" of students.

Some evaluation team members suggested that a major factor contributing to the negative perception of alternative schools is the confusion that exists relative to their purposes. These schools should be viewed as schools of opportunity, and not locations where MPS can *place* or *displace* its "problem" students.

The negative perception of community-based alternatives does not go unnoticed with students and parents. Most at-risk students in need of an alternative setting already suffer from low self-esteem and hold the belief that "no one cares" for them. Wehlage *et al.* (1989) found that at-risk students are in danger of dropping out of school because they have experienced personal and academic failures and constantly receive a host of messages from adults and peers suggesting that they are not worthy. Thus, if the institution they will be attending is portrayed in the context of failure, the institution itself loses legitimacy in their eyes. During interviews conducted for this evaluation, a student said: "the school system wants to get rid of us because we are *loosers*." Another spoke about being "punished" when he was assigned to an alternative school, and others thought they could not choose another school if their alternative school assignment failed to work for them. These perceptions appear to color how, initially, at-risk students re-commit themselves to learning in community-based alternatives. One agency told interviewers that it may take some students as long as a year to drop "the negative attitude" before they become *disposed* to learning again.

Commentary and Recommendations:

It is reasonable to expect that there will continue to be a need for alternative educational settings for school-

age youth as long as the causes of poor academic performance, and the social ills affecting poor and minority group children, continue to exist in Milwaukee. Community-based alternative schools are today, and may continue to be, a necessary and important component of the MPS educational delivery system.

The negative perception held by many observers of community-based alternatives is both an MPS and a partnership schools' problem. It does no good to MPS or its partnership schools that they be thought of and treated as "holding places" or community sites where "troubled youth" are ***"placed in"*** and ***"kept"*** until they graduate or leave without completing their schooling.

To address the issues discussed in the section above, the following is recommended:

1. As a matter of policy, MPS needs to resolve the sensitive and potentially liable dichotomy created by assigning students who are the legal responsibility of the district to community-based alternatives that are perceived and treated, by district staff and others, as schools that are less than worthy of being integrated into the district's educational, organizational and fiscal structures. MPS partnership schools need to be treated as "real schools" and as "importantly significant partners." Youth who enroll in these schools should not be treated as "second class" students or as rejects of the public schools. They are MPS students.

2. MPS should <u>positively</u> promote the MPS partnership school network. The district should include references to them in their literature to parents, and should portray them as programs which provide at-risk students with additional educational ***options***. District literature should provide specific information on each of the MPS partner-

ship schools, their individual instructional focus, and information on their distinctive characteristics.

3. The MPS informational literature on alternative schools should clearly differentiate between community-based partnerships schools which operate to reengage at-risk youth in the learning enterprise, and those which have contracts to work with youth who are "chronic disrupters" or who have been reassigned because of "severe behavioral problems."[24] Although this distinction is made in some district documents, it does not appear to be clear to the public, or to MPS administrative and school-based staff.

4. MPS should "talk up" successful MPS partnership school programs and provide resources to publicize their successes. The DAPMD should work with these schools to help attract special attention to their *success stories*. MPS should also encourage faculty and staff from UW-Milwaukee, MATC, and other area colleges to collaborate with the MPS partnership schools in research, evaluation, staff development, and other projects.

5. MPS should connect its partnership schools in more meaningful ways to the "system" and to staff development activities. For example, MPS should invite the equivalent of the MPS partnership school principal to MPS principals' (and related administrative) meetings. MPS and agency teachers should always be invited to district staff development activities and should be meaningfully involved in the planning of these activities. MPS

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[24]. Making this distinction should not be construed as suggesting that programs for "chronic disrupters" and those designated for "behavioral reassignments" should be merely "holding places." On the contrary, it is later recommended in this report that these programs be as academically challenging as any other program.

partnership school staff should be invited to make informational presentations at meetings of the Superintendent's cabinet and to meetings of other school administrators, support staff, student services personnel, curriculum personnel, exceptional education staff, etc.

Partnership Autonomy and Statutory Compliance

An important condition of a partnership relationship is respect for each partner's autonomy. Interviews revealed that the MPS partnership schools evaluated were all very concerned that they be able to sustain the autonomy enjoyed to date in their relationship with MPS. Partnership school representatives have argued that if these schools are to be true and distinctive *options* for at-risk students, they need to retain control of, among other things, their policy-making authority, curriculum, and staffing, as well as flexibility in the use of their resources. One agency director indicated that this expectation is not different from what the research literature says advocates of site-based management want for their schools. In successful site-based managed schools these features or authorities are generally assured, and receiving funding from MPS should not prevent MPS partnership schools from doing likewise.

MPS policy to date does not assert *direct* control over MPS partnership schools which infringes on their autonomy. There are, however, *indirect* controls in the form of requirements that need to be met to comply with state law and with the school district's contractual obligations with its bargaining units.[25]

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[25]. An example of this (previously discussed) is the selection, hiring, assignment, transfer, and dismissal of MPS teachers assigned to MPS partnership schools. The research literature suggest that these authorities are critical to the effective

Commentary and Recommendations

Striking a balance between the desires of MPS partnership schools to exercise their autonomy, and their obligations to their funding source and state statutes, appears to have caused tensions between the *partners* over the past few years. Some of these tensions still need to be resolved. In so doing, MPS needs to take into account the following:

1. An MPS partnership school's exercise of operational and policy-making autonomy cannot work to ignore its contractual obligations to its funding source, or not to comply with statutorily required educational outcomes. Nor should it work to undermine the expectations of its parents and students.

2. As long as youth in MPS partnership schools are statutorily MPS students the district has full responsibility to ensure that these youth are afforded access to equal educational opportunities. This means that a student assigned to an MPS partnership should have as much of a *"real"* chance as any other MPS student to complete his/her high school education, and that alternative programs funded with public resources will have educational "outcomes" indicative of their ability to provide students with such a chance. Living up to this obligation can be accomplished without violating the principle of CBO autonomy.

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functioning of any school. Yet they are not currently an option for MPS partnership schools.

Authentic Assessment and Credit Granting

Evaluation teams found that criteria for credit granting varies greatly among the 11 MPS partnership schools evaluated. In at least 4 of the 11 schools, how students accumulate credit for graduation was very suspect, as was assessment of students' academic performance and progress in at least 6 of the schools. In 5 of the 11 schools the most frequently used instructional strategy is individualized tutoring. In these schools students appear to be granted academic credit mostly for attendance and/or the completion of remedial basic skills tasks.

In one school, interviews and observations show that instruction is reduced to an MPS teacher that assigns individualized work to students, which is corrected once completed. Yet, student records show students accumulating as many as 7 credits in one year. In another, several MPS teachers moved from student to student answering questions and helping them with their tasks. No group instruction or interaction was observed, nor were there curriculum objectives clearly articulated. At this school, students interviewed indicated that they worked daily on whatever they preferred to do. In yet another school, students participated briefly in class discussions, then went off to do individualized work. When interviewed, they indicated that *sometimes* they did math and English, but most of the time they did social studies, the area of content preparation of the MPS teacher. When files were reviewed, most students had been given better than "C's" in most subject areas, and even on subjects the students themselves said they had barely studied during the semester.

Authentic assessment seems to be found only in the most experienced and successful MPS partnership schools. Schools where performance assessment was suspect or unacceptable, were also weak in their curriculum and program design.

Commentary and Recommendations

Effective/successful school literature points to the need for a focused curriculum, clear instructional objectives, and well-defined academic assessment programs (Lipsitz, 1984). If schools are deficient programmatically and in their curriculum, then there is not much students can be assessed on, and their progress on standardized skills-discreet reading and math tests becomes very misleading.

As many observers of school reform have suggested, even students who receive minimal competency-based instruction can show improvements in these tests (Cummins, 1984), but they may have failed to acquired the subject-matter content needed for successful participation in higher level schooling. This in turn can lead to a recurring of the academic frustration that these students probably experienced in early grades (and which contributed to their academic "problems"in the first place) later in higher grade levels. Thus their chances of high school completion, or their entry into job training and/or collegiate education, may not be increased by their participation in curriculum and/or assessment-deficient, tutorial-type partnership school programs any more than in a traditional school setting.

A parent interviewed in one of the schools with a tutorial-type, assessment-deficient partnership school program stated that her daughter has always been really set on going to college. When she enrolled in her current MPS partnership school she improved her attendance and raised her grades to "A's" and "B's". However, the student told the parent that work at the school was "too easy"; that it was easy to get "good" grades, and that she was about to finish high school with a high GPA, but was afraid she had not learned anything that could help her in college. The parent, while appreciative of the MPS partnership school

for improving her daughter's attendance record, is worried that once in college her daughter will fail. She told the researcher that: "My daughter will be the only one in the family ever to make it to college, but now I'm afraid she won't be able to stay there..."

To continue to give academic credit to students based on class attendance or participation in tutorial activities, or based on any other criteria other than measures of the actual acquisition of subject-matter content knowledge and its applications, is educational fraud. For too long proponents of educational reform have exposed this condition in many urban schools. It makes no sense to replicate this in community-based alternative schools. It is recommended that

1. MPS take immediate action to assess the adequacy of academic and performance assessment in its partnership schools' network. Wherever there is an absence of authentic assessment, it should be corrected.

2. MPS should periodically monitor partnership schools to ensure that there are authentic assessment and legitimate credit granting procedures.

Indiviudalized Educational Training Plans (IETP)

A requirement set by MPS as a condition for funding is the development by the partnership school of an IETP for every at-risk student enrolled in a program. Each agency is to have on file a completed IETP, which will guide the student's education through the program or to high school completion. IETP's are supposed to be developed in collaboration with the student, so that he/she becomes aware of what he/she needs to meet his/her educational goals. They are also to be used to counsel students on their academic

progress and to set an employment/education plan for them. IETP's must be made available to MPS staff during monitoring visits.

Evaluation team members found that in at least 5 of the 11 partnership schools evaluated IETP files were incomplete. In 4 of the schools they were inadequate: many files were missing crucial information on the students' academic status. This finding correlates with students' claims that in some MPS partnership schools they were not sure what they needed to complete their program of study.

Commentary and Recommendations

Students in schools with inadequate IETP's may be on a lost course. Failure to have adequate IETP's on each student is a contractual compliance issue. It is recommended that

1. The DAPMD provide each MPS partnership school with notice of the importance of IETP's and set a monitoring schedule to review them at each site.

2. The DAPMD provide MPS partnership schools with specific procedures for the completion of IETP's. Procedures should specify how to include students and parents in the process of IETP development.

Staff Development

Another major theme is the need for ongoing staff development in the partnership schools evaluated. Although there are committed and highly qualified staff in many MPS partnership schools, evaluation teams noted that the great majority of MPS and agency staff is in need of training in how best to work with an at-risk student population made up, predominantly, of ethnic/racial minority and poor

youth. As previously noted in this document, evaluation team members also observed that in many MPS partnership schools there is a predominance of ***White*** staff working with a predominantly minority student population. This can create a problem of cultural and experiential incompatibility between staff and learners.

The problem of poor staff preparation in many partnership schools is also compounded by the practice of assigning teachers to teach multiple subjects outside of their content area of expertise. Some of the teachers/staff interviewed suggested that they would prefer not to teach in areas in which they are not prepared, but funding limitations often force the agency to make these assignments.

Team members also noted that most teachers in MPS partnership schools welcome all the help they can get. One teacher said she was sure to speak for others when she stated that there is a need for peer coaching among teachers and for a workable network where teachers can exchange ideas and collaborate in projects.

Commentary and Recommendations

The teaching staff of most partnership schools are isolated from each other and have few opportunities to share and experiment together. The DAPMD should promote more collaboration between the partnership schools and joint staff development activities.

MPS needs to carefully review the findings of this evaluation for guidance in the development of a comprehensive staff development plan for all staff associated with the partnership schools. It is recommended that the DAPMD seek assistance from MPS curriculum and staff development experts and educational consultants, and that

they collaborate to implement the following activities:

1. Periodic implementation of specialized and customized inservices planned by and directed at the total network of MPS partnership school staff, and/or individually for selected schools.

2. Identify long-term staff development needs in partnership schools and provide technical support in developing a school-by-school long-term inservice plan.

3. Monitor partnership schools to minimize the assignment of staff to teach subject content they have not been prepared to teach.

4. Where necessary, assist partnership schools in increasing the representation within their staff of racial/ethnic minorities.

Parental Involvement

All partnership schools reported that they keep parents well informed about the status of their children, and that they have educational and social events they invite parents to, regularly. Evaluators found this to be true. But interviews with parents suggested that meaningful parental involvement was of secondary importance to most MPS partnership schools. There are very few MPS partnership schools where parents are included in the planning and implementation of significant educational activities.

Generally, parents are supportive of their particular partnership school because it offers another opportunity for their children to complete school, but not because they know much about the educational program and how it will work to meet the needs of their children.

Commentary and Recommendations

1. Partnership Schools need to develop more effective ways of involving parents in the working and governance of their programs. The research literature supports a "meaningful" involvement of parents in the educational activities of the school (Phi Delta Kappa, 1980; Lipsitz, 1984; Governor's Study Commission, 1985).

2. The DAPMD should work closely with MPS partnership schools in the development of "meaningful" and "participatory" models of parental involvement. These plans should be an integral part of the "school improvement plans" discussed earlier in other recommendations of this report.

Behavioral Reassignment Programs

One of the activities supervised by the DAPMD is the ***Behavioral Reassignment Program***. This program was created by MPS to have accessible non-public school sites to place students who have committed weapon violations. During the 1991-92 school year MPS rented space at two of its partnership schools and assigned one MPS teacher to each site. At one site the student-teacher ratio was 15:1, at another it was 20:1. It was the purpose of this program to provide educational services in a restrictive and structured environment in these "rented rooms," presumably, to reinforce positive behavior in these students.

Both of the sites visited were found to be inadequate for this type of educational program. Facilities were generally unsafe (15 or 20 angry and generally violent students in one small room is a dramatically unsafe situation for both students and the MPS teacher), not

adequately cleaned, and clearly not liked by the students nor the MPS staff. Furthermore, there is no articulated curriculum for these programs. How students can accumulate credit towards graduation in these settings is truly an enigma. There can be no promise that these students will ever be able to catch up academically for re-entry into "regular" or other partnership schools.

Several evaluation team members commented that these programs were "prison-like" and "holding tanks" which can only lead to more student anger and more anti-social and violent behavior. During team discussions, it was concluded that placing these students in these settings was ill-advised policy and a practice far from what schools should be all about.

This raises serious questions of equity and civil liberties violations that need to be immediately address by the district. Evaluation team members felt that, as presently offered, these programs are very depressive and not conducive to any positive change in behavior. On the contrary, they may work to further alienate youth who are already at-risk of dropping out.

Commentary and Recommendations

The two sites used by MPS to house its Behavioral Reassignment Programs were found to be totally inadequate. They were unsafe, bleak, and totally missing in a curriculum to support their primary purpose: changing the behavior of these students so that they can re-enter the educational process. Therefore, it is recommended that MPS do as follows:

1. Abolish the Behavioral Reassignment Program and find other approaches of disciplining students for weapons' violations.

2. Collaborate with Milwaukee area youth serving agencies to develop a program for these students that connects them to meaningful academic and community activity, provides them with employment, and which ensures substantial monitoring and support by social workers, psychologists, and guidance counseling for them and their families.

3. Ensure that if a new program is developed for placement in a non-MPS agency, it be housed in better facilities. Furthermore, it is mandatory that more supervision be provided by MPS, that a meaningful curriculum is developed, and that staff are adequately trained for the task of educating behaviorally difficult students.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be stated with certainty that the network of MPS partnership schools is viable and that it can work to effectively support MPS in its mission. Some of these schools have the potential to become local and national models of "effective" education; others can at least provide hopeful alternatives for at-risk students. With few exceptions, the physical plant, curricular and programmatic, and organizational deficiencies of MPS partnership schools identified during this evaluation can be corrected and/or improved.

MPS should help its partnership schools to correct their deficiencies, and it must make a true commitment to treat them as an integral part of its educational delivery system. To ensure that all MPS partnership schools are given the opportunity to become successful models, MPS needs to draw from the findings and recommendations of this evaluation and invest resources in helping partnership schools prepare for effective program delivery.

It is both in the best interest of MPS and its children, and in the interest of each of the partnership schools currently receiving MPS funding, that a School-based Improvement Plan be developed for each MPS partnership school early in the approaching academic year. MPS should develop criteria to determine the adequacy of each plan, and it must carefully monitor its implementation and evaluation.

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Tony Báez
July 1992

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MPS EVALUATION OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

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Tony Baez, Principal Investigator
Nancy Anderson, Social Worker
Ron Meier, MPS Teacher
Dan Grego, Director Shalom High School
Michael Coates (Student Representative)

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MPS PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS' EVALUATION
PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS EVALUATED, JULY 1992

		Capacity	Enrollment
1.	Aurora Weir Educational Center 2669 N. Richards Street Milwaukee, WI 53212 Phone: 562-8398	58	51
2.	Council for the Spanish-Speaking 614 W. National Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53204 Phone: 384-3700	25	30
3.	Career Youth Development 2601 N. Martin King Drive Milwaukee, WI 53212 Phone: 264-6888	60	40
4.	Learning Enterprise of Wisconsin, Inc. 600 W. Walnut Street Milwaukee, WI 53212 Phone: 265-5742	46	60
5.	Milwaukee Spectrum, Inc. 3434 N. 38th Street Milwaukee, WI 53216 Phone: 442-8011	50	61
6.	Milwaukee Urban League 2800 W. Wright Street Milwaukee, WI 53210 Phone: 374-5850	25	27
7.	Next Door/Cornerstone Project Excel 2201 N. 35th Street Milwaukee, WI 53208 Phone: 447-1041	101	100
8.	Shalom High School 1749 N. 16th Street Milwaukee, WI 53205 Phone: 933-5019	80	82
9.	Seeds of Health 2433 So. 15th Street Milwaukee, WI 53215 Phone: 643-9111	111	95
10.	Silver Spring 5460 N. 64th Street Milwaukee, WI 53218 Phone: 463-7950	30	31
11.	United Community Center 1028 So. 9th Street Milwaukee, WI 53204 Phone: 384-3100	40	34

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